

Interview Date: October 26, 2016

Interviewee: Sister [Cecile] Annette Bower

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Kelby Thwaites, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Mary Trunk, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Laura Townsend, Production Coordinator, CSJ Institute.

Location: [Carondelet Center]

Transcription Date: 12/21/2016

Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] INTERVIEWER: [Director's comments].

[00:01:32.07] INTERVIEWER: Let's start by having you share with us your full name and your age.

[00:01:37.28] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well my full name at this stage of the game is Cecile Annette Bower, and my age is eighty-three. However, I go by multiple names, because when I went to grad school no one liked or could pronounce or spell "Cecile". And so I just dropped the Cecile and ended up with Annette Bower. Well that creates a lot of problems, because when I entered the convent I was signed up for Medicare when they could, and they signed me as Cecile Annette Bower. So officially, I'm Cecile Annette Bower, but they have it. So I just try to handle the problems when they arise. I go by Annette. [laughs]. That simplifies life.

[00:02:30.18] INTERVIEWER: Where were you born and where did you grow up?

[00:02:33.00] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well I was born in Rochester, New York on the shores of Lake Ontario, and spent my young years there until I was--finished my sophomore year in high school. My dad had died just recently from that--had died from throat cancer, and my mother was told that she must not spend another winter or--because of her heart--she wouldn't make it. So the doctor said, "Florida or California." Well, my oldest brother and his wife and two year old son had moved to California and bought a lovely home in Inglewood, and said, "We have plenty of room--it's huge--come live with us." That's how I got to California. So the rest of my life has basically been primarily California, Arizona and Washington, D.C.--so back and forth--but really California.

[00:03:42.10] INTERVIEWER: Did you have other siblings?

[00:03:43.26] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Yes. I had two brothers, one thirteen years older than I--and my mother almost died from that. And so I was not to come along--I was not expected. So ten years later, she had tried again, and had another son. Jack is my oldest brother's name--Don was my second brother's name. And I came along with mother's determination that she was going to have a girl--[laughs]. At any rate I was born three years later from Don. And I felt sorry for my brothers actually. My oldest brother was like my dad, and the younger brother who was three years older than I was worn within the inch of his life from my mom--"Don't let anything happen to her. You take care of your sister". [laughs]. So there you have it. Anyway I had a good relation with both of my brothers, and unfortunately they have both died. So being the baby in the family I'm still here. [laughs].

[00:05:02.15] INTERVIEWER: What was it like to move from New York to California as a teenager?

[00:05:07.13] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well, a lot of it was difficult, because I had so many friends. And I grew up in an area where you could do anything. You didn't have to lock your door, you didn't even have to close it. You could get on a bike as a kid and ride forever. And it was total security and it didn't make any difference whose mother or dad told you to do something--you did it. So it was just like everyone belonged to everyone else--everyone took care of everyone else. And so it was a lovely time to grow up, and also a lovely setting. I spent lots of time on the beach. And one example I could give you about taking care of others--I was on the beach--I had a dog--and I was on the beach with my brother Don, and he picked up a branch to throw out in the water for the dog to go chase and bring it back, which the dog loved to do. So yours truly was behind him. I moved up too close behind him, because I wanted to watch the dog, and

whammo he puts the branch back and hits me right in the face [gestures to upper lip]. And so I'm spouting this blood. Well he's utterly panicked--my mother was at work--so tears up to the neighbors--tells them what happened--they get me--take me to the hospital just like family. It's just the way it was. Everybody took care of everybody else. And so it was a lovely place to grow up. So I knew I was going to miss that. But the main thing I was going to miss my friends. I'd known some of these kids from grade school--first grade on through to my sophomore year in high school. And I went to the Sisters of Mercy--Mercy High. And you know it was home--only home I knew. And so it was hard. But I was excited about seeing Jack and the baby, et cetera, and his wife.

[00:07:22.24] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: So I got to St. Mary's Academy--the first day of school. And the principal was Sister [Mary] Josephine [Feeley (1905-1991)] at the time. And she welcomed me. She said, "Yes, yes we'll take her. Just bring her by"--on I think it was the ninth of September whatever. And so I get there and she says, "Oh, we're so happy to see you, and so happy to have you. You got all A's in English." And I looked at her just [gestures across face] dead. It was like "Um-hm. I got A's in science too. And science is my love." "Oh," she says, "you'll need English too." [laughs]. So being a little embarrassed at that [was my own response] I just kept my mouth shut. She says, "We're delighted to have you here. And you will have science." And so then she brought in Sister Cecilia Louise [Moore (1928-2004)] who was a young beautiful nun--who was Chemistry teacher. And said, "Since you like Science I want you to meet." So it turned out fine. You know, it was lovely.

[00:08:32.27] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: And I finished my junior year and then what happened was that they--my family, who had just moved two years ahead to Inglewood--my brother was appointed a--in charge of one of the--can't remember his ranking--he was Air Force. Anyway he was promoted in charge as one of the Directors of the Nevada Test Site. So it meant he would have to fly from California to Nevada every week--come home on the weekends. So they decided to buy a house in Albuquerque which would be the closer area and also a big Air Force base. So they moved in January. And the choice was given to me: come with us, or come with us later and finish--you know if you want to stay and finish your year at the Academy, that's okay. And I said, "I want to stay." [smiles]. And so, I'm sitting in the lounge at school at break time, and Sister Josephine walks in and I'm the only one there in the lounge now watching TV. And so she walks in and I'm on this couch--[laughs]--and so she says, "What are you doing?" and blah blah--you know, we talked about what I was watching and that kind of stuff. And so she says, "So, tell me, what are you thinking of doing when you finish high school?" And I looked her straight in the eye and I said, "I want to be a Sister. I've wanted to be a Sister since I was this big." My mother always sent me over when I was in grade school and said, "Go say hello to Sister. Go say good morning to Sister." So I knew them--you know, I wasn't afraid of them. And so anyway I said, "I want to be a Sister." She said, "Oh." And Sister Josephine--to give you a tiny bit of background--she was in full habit, and the long rosary beads, okay. Here's this high school kid sitting on the couch, you know, being a smart aleck. And so she says to me, "What community? What Sisters were you thinking of?" And I said, "Well, I don't really know. I grew up with the Mercys--I had them in grade school--I studied in high school with them. And then I had the Sisters of St. Joseph only here for this semester. And I like them, but you know." And she says, "So what are you thinking about?" And I said, "Well my neighbors were two young men--two young boys--I grew up with them basically--besides my brothers--and they both became oblates, and one of them went to the North--to Alaska, Northwest Territory. And said 'Join the Grey nuns and come work with us.'" You know, this was--I didn't know what that meant, but I kept it in my mind--because I knew them and I liked them. And his younger brother--oblates and went to South America. I didn't even consider South America because I didn't know that much about it at that time. So anyway. I said, "So I'm thinking about the Grey nuns--I'm thinking about the Mercys because they're the ones I know." So she takes her rosary and she twirls it like this [makes twirling gesture near waist], and that was a dangerous sign we knew it. [laughs]. I was there long enough to know that when she twirled the rosary you were in trouble. So she twirled the rosary and I looked at her and she says, "So what are you going to do?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. I need to find out some more about the Grey nuns." And she says, "Well what about the Sisters of St. Joseph?" And of course I'm frozen to the couch by then. And I said--she was standing over here next to me--and looking down on me with her rosary going. And I said, "Well, I'll think about them. I just hadn't thought about them." She says, "Well, think about them!"--twirls the rosary and walks out of the room. [laughs]. Leaves me there. Of course I'm frozen to the couch. I didn't want to move. Anyway, that's how it all happened. And I'll tell you, the crazy part of it was, I mean--I was talking to a friend yesterday--we can't understand the things that happened to us. You know, they just happened. And in community, the same thing. So it was like I did think about it, and Sister Cecilia Louise,

Sister Josephine and others--I really liked them. And the minute they thought I was thinking of community--[laughs]--you know they started to ply me with "What about this" and "What about that."

[00:14:09.17] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: So at any rate, I finished my junior year there, and at the end they wanted my mother to come over and meet the provincial and blah blah blah--because they knew I was thinking then Sisters of St. Joseph. And so she came, and she says, "Well, I want assurance that my daughter's going to have her college education. We've always been well educated in our family. I've seen the boys have their degrees and I want to be sure that my daughter goes to college and has a degree." And so they shrugged, and said, "Oh, all our Sisters go and get degrees. She will definitely get a degree." So mom signed the papers, okay, that yes she would accept the fact. And of course I was panting to make sure she did sign them because I did by then really want to pursue the Sisters of St. Joseph, because I'd gotten to know them more and more and more. And anyway back to the academic--New York system is--was at that time anyway--I don't know what they are now--at that time they were ahead academically because of the Regents exams and all those kinds of things. So I had already studied a lot of the courses that I would have had to study here as a senior. And so Josephine says, "You know, you only need this and that"--I can't even remember what they were--Senior Religion, Red Cross and some History class. She says, "I'll give you this stuff to do in the summer. At the end of the summer, you take exams. You pass, you'll get your diploma, and then you can--if you enter the Sisters of St. Joseph--[smiles]--right, a little--if you enter the Sisters of St. Joseph then you can just walk with your regular high school class for graduation, because you will be right here." We had the novitiate and the classrooms--see, was all at old St. Mary's on Slausen Avenue at that time. So she says, "Then you can just walk with your class. We'll give you the gowns et cetera and that's your class." And so anyway, that's what we did. And so with a little manipulation, that's how I ended up with the Sisters of St. Joseph at the same time--I finished my junior year--flew home to Albuquerque for the summer--did my studies--took my exams--flew back, and entered the community instead of doing my quote "senior year". And so then I was a postulate. So that's how I got here if you will. And I've never regretted it--never regretted that decision.

[00:17:26.23] INTERVIEWER: Do you remember--as you got to know the Sisters of St. Joseph--what it was that attracted you?

[00:17:33.09] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well, part of it was their commitment, but part of it was their warmth and caring for me and other people. And the more I got to know them, obviously, the more I realized--you know, we never used the word "charism" in those days--we never even knew what that meant. "Charismatic" yes, but "charism" no. And so I really had to kind of--when you ask me that question--I have to step back--because it's--they're so much a part of me. And from the beginning, you know, I was very attracted to some of the Sisters--Cecilia Louise, who was the scientist, and Josephine were friends till they died--personal friends. And so what attracted me though about all of the things the Sisters did was their concern for people who needed them--concern for people in trouble--concern for people who were ill or had problems and needed help. And that went from children, young people, through to elderly people. And it was just like--to me--like a huge extended family. You were accepted and loved and welcomed no matter where you went. So part of that comes through when they talk about what they do and why they do it. You know, kind of thing. And I fell in love with that. Also--as an aside--I knew I could do my science. Now I didn't know that I couldn't do it in the other communities. I just didn't know the other communities outside of--you know. So--

[00:19:38.25] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Tell us about your love of science and how that started for you as a child. How did you know you loved science?

[00:19:46.12] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: My mother. My mother was, I think, a naturalist. I mean, she had a degree--she taught--she ended up being a Director in Kodak. But you know, she loved nature. And our front yard--we lived in a house--the houses were all on side streets off the lake. And so we lived right at the lake, you know, and so there was a walk in front of our house--a hill--the sand--and the water. So in front of our house was probably as much space as the width of this room. And every spot she could find she would plant something. So we had rhubarb--which I was threatened--which I loved--threatened within an inch of my life not to touch until it got really red, you know--because I couldn't wait because I liked it. But we had rhubarb here and rhubarb here and lilies of the valley around the tree, and she loved nature. And in the garage--around the back of the garage, my brothers--I got to take care of them--but we had rabbits and

different you know, animals. We grew up with pets of all kinds. And so to me, my mother started that in me, you know--the what about nature and the what about--. My oldest brother went off to be an engineer--to get his degree in engineering--thinking he was going to work on airplanes and build airplanes. Well, he ended up joining the Air Force, but because he had his degree--didn't get involved in the war and they moved him right up into a leadership position. So when my mother saw that she made sure when the second boy came along the same thing happened. And so he went in--he wanted to fly, but he had heart palpitations. So when they started him as a pilot they had to say it's too dangerous. You can't fly anymore, you've got to proceed in other directions. So he went into early technology--yeah, early tech--and did a lot of the technology--computer work. But I was always involved in science. I was always involved with people who loved science because of my brothers and my mother. And my mother was an elementary school teacher for a period of time. And her classroom was loaded with stuff--animals, plants. So I owe so much to my mother. "Blame" my mother for the routes I took. Because it made a difference to me. We lived a few miles from the school so had to take a bus to school. So we'd take a bus, get off the bus, walk over to--just in the same block, I mean you walked across the street and here's the rectory and here's the church and the school. And as we were walking and she was a teacher who had her stuff, and she'd--"Go say good morning to Sister. Go say hello to Sister." Well we'd go to Mass every morning. And so it was, "Sit there and be quiet."

[00:23:35.23] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: So it was that kind of thing--mixed religion with a human relationship--not only to the Church and God but to the nuns et cetera. And so I wasn't afraid of them--I mean, I'd run over and they'd love me up and--yeah, et cetera. So again it was just like extended family. And so it didn't surprise my mother. My brothers of course used to tease the life out of her--that, "She didn't really want to have a family, she wanted to be a nun." Because she was always so--she was always doing things for the nuns--and she kept pushing me in that direction--not directly, but indirectly. So as I say I owe a tremendous amount to my mother. Didn't know my father well because he was so ill and had the cancer for so long before he died. And in those days they just didn't know what to do about things like that. So I didn't know my father. And when we'd go to the hospital to visit--which we went frequently--my brothers could go up to see him, but I couldn't. So my oldest brother would go with my brother--my younger brother would stay and keep me--and I was positioned so I could look up at his window--his bedroom window. And he'd get up to the window and wave. But that was, you know. I didn't have an awful lot of memories of my dad. I had zillions of memories of my mom, because she was very influential in my life. So that's--that's kind of how.

[00:25:27.26] INTERVIEWER: Tell us a little bit about your experience in the novitiate--any memories you have of community life or your formation?

[00:25:35.16] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well, being the darling sweet thing that I was, and obedient thing that I was--[smiles]--we were at old St. Mary's. So you had the high school right there. And some of the students would come over and do things--and we'd go out and play basketball on their things, et cetera. And so we weren't supposed to talk to the students. We had separated ourselves and we were supposed to pay attention to what we were doing. We went there--of course, they didn't want us to get too much involved with the students, because they figured we'd leave. But anyway, so I knew the route, as it were, on how to get upstairs to the second floor--I lived on the third floor--and the steps from the school were right--same section. So many times you'd see the students. Well I knew my friends and I knew what times their classes were. So I'd make sure that I could go up the stairs--went up the stairs to do something or get something or whatever--so I could always wave at them and talk to them. Well, a couple of the Sisters knew this very well. They used to tease me about it. They didn't say don't do it, you know, kind of thing. But they said, "Remember, they're separate." So you know, it was that kind of a sense, you know. And so I managed to say hello occasionally--[smiles]--quite often actually--"How are things? What's going on? What's happened to so-and-so?"--that kind of thing. And then we'd split and go our ways. First of all, "darling" here [gestures at self] didn't want to get caught--[laughs]--interacting with the students when I knew I wasn't supposed to. But anyway. And then they had free days where we mixed, so it was--. Old St. Mary's was just that--it was "old" St. Mary's. The building was in some ways "antique-y"--in some ways gorgeous. They had these areas where they had the hedges of roses up over trellises, and it was just a lovely warm setting. Beautiful front yard where they had graduation out and around the statue. So it was just a lovely traditional area. And so we had access to the students rec areas at certain times and certain days--and on weekends and so on when they weren't around. So it was another kind of homey spot, if you will.

[00:28:34.06] INTERVIEWER: What about the rule--you know, keeping silence and those kinds of things. Was that difficult for you--

[00:28:40.19] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Um-hm.

[00:28:40.28] INTERVIEWER: --or something about the life that was challenging?

[00:28:43.06] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: [laughs]. No, it was challenging to keep silence. First of all, there were a bunch of us that were friends. And secondly--I'll tell you a funny story in a second--it was hard to keep silence. And it was easier to isolate yourself to keep silence than it was to be around, you know, people. Well, one day--I forgot what happened, but--because we lived on the top floor and the governance people had offices on the next floor down--well I was late. I don't know--who knows what I was doing. [laughs]. I certainly don't remember. Anyway, I was late. And so I went hurrying to get across that top floor to get down these stairs--it was two tiers of stairs--to get where I belonged at the meeting--the community thing. Well I get down to the--almost to the bottom of the second flight of stairs--and this little nun--Sister Roberta [??]--Roberta is about my size--and she--she ran the show. I mean, she took care of the buildings, she says, "Who's making all that noise?" And I'm like--[looks around]--there's nobody else around but me--I said, "Me, I guess." [laughs]. She says, "You go right back up there, and you walk the way you should walk. I don't want to hear your footsteps." [laughs]. So yours truly trots back upstairs--tries to tiptoe down. [laughs]. You know, there's crazy things like that would happen. And you'd tell these stories to each other and just laugh, you know. So a lot of that kind of stuff happened. But Roberta was an absolute doll. Everybody loved her, because nothing you needed or nothing that happened that she wasn't there to help you take care of it. So that was the other side of her. But you know--also she was trying to tame these new kids that just came in off the street. [laughs]. So--yeah--that was the way it was.

[00:30:59.14] INTERVIEWER: What about when you took your final profession or received the habit. Were those good memories for you?

[00:31:05.19] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Very good memories for me, yes. Entering community--because they were so good to us--you know, they knew we were young squirts, didn't know which end was up. And we needed to be mothered--and we were mothered. So the habit, you know, was--getting the habit--I remember kneeling down and saying, yes I do for saying the vows. And the funny part of that was--that was the serious part of it. And I was very anxious to make sure I got that habit. [laughs]. At the same time, I wasn't a sweet innocent little thing. And so what we did when we got to the altar to kneel down to make our vow speeches--we noticed that there were certain spots, because we had practiced. And there were--we took all certain areas--we knew exactly how many of these spots there were. [Gestures nudging with elbow] "Where's so-and-so?" [nudging]. "So-and-so's not here!" You know--and of course there were a few empty spots--I think there were two or three. And so the big deal was shutting us up at the altar, making sure we kept quiet and didn't make a fuss about it. And they said, "Don't be concerned. They're fine." That's all we got. But they didn't make vows. And anyway--no it was a repressed excitement, but excitement. You just couldn't wait. You wanted to get this thing on, because that's what you were here for, and you wanted to be sure they didn't say no to you--that you weren't accepted. So at any rate, there was a repressed excitement, but everyone could sense it--you could just feel it. And when we went in to kneel down in practice, I mean, the place was electric.

[00:33:21.15] INTERVIEWER: [Director's comments] [Cut].

[00:35:43.13] INTERVIEWER: So let's talk about your education at the Mount. Did you go to the Mount and were you missioned at the same time, or did you do your studies separately?

[00:35:53.17] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: No, actually, I was missioned when I went to the Mount. My first mission was to a school--grade school--here in Los Angeles. And on Saturdays we would go and have classes. That's how I started my college education. And we'd come home. The superior I had was Sister Anastasia [??]--again, short--dead Irish--and loved sports. So we'd get on the bus, get off to the college, have class, come back--and she loved to cook et cetera--and also watch the ball game on Saturday. So the issue was, when we got off that bus, we knew whether they had won or lost. If they won, her veil was up

[gestures pulling veil back from face]. If they lost--[laughs][gestures pulling veil over face]--her veil was down. We'd just stand there and laugh--[laughs]--and then hug her. Anyway that's how my college education started. And that went on for--I was there three years--so that went on for at least two years. And then I went from the grade school to St. Mary's Academy--the high school--and that's when I first got involved in actually being expected to teach science, because that's what I loved. Well, people where there--Cecilia Louise was there so it was okay. So I taught Biology--didn't know what I was doing. But I mean--talk about naive. So I did a lot of prep work. But anyway, loved it. So I taught at the high school also. Loved the high school level. Loved their enthusiasm and their excitement. I mean they would just bubble with--you know--all the time--always doing something. And so you couldn't not be enriched by it--stimulated by it. You wanted to share it with them, and at the same time you had to calm them down enough that they would tend to the class material. But no I loved St. Mary's Academy. It was a fun place to be. And I wasn't too much older than they were, so, you know, it was--I had to learn how to maintain some discipline in the classroom. But it was fun.

[00:38:51.08] INTERVIEWER: Who were some of your Sister faculty at the Mount?

[00:38:55.12] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well, Cecilia Louise again was my Sister faculty. Sister Mary Gerald Leahy [(1917-2004)] was the Chair of Biological Sciences--Cecilia Louise was in Chemistry, and became the Chair of the Chemistry Department--although I had to take a lot of Chemistry, but you know basically--. And Sister Mary Gerald--now I was, you know, a squirt--I was really young. I was trying to get some knowledge and get prepared. And at the same time I was asked to teach. Sister Mary Gerald used to go to Africa and do her *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito studies. I loved her study. But I was her student now. I had to learn how to do research as a student. And she used to bring these mosquitos back home--put them in these little--like you'd buy a quart of ice cream--that kind of a size of container--with this netting on top of it. Okay, darling students--[rolls up sleeve]--roll up your sleeve and put your arm on top of the--which we did. Because they had to have a blood meal in order to make eggs. So at the time, I didn't like it too much, but I did it--[unintelligible]--then as I got older I thought, "That's insane!" [laughs].

[00:40:43.05] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Anyway, very quickly Sister Gerald became quite ill. So she couldn't--well she still was doing her summer trips, but she was doing much, much less at the college--teaching at the college. So we started to step in and, you know, I was the next one. And then Sister Margaret [Marie] O'Rourke had--was sent off to get her degree--she was a couple of years older than I--still very active--so she went to San Francisco to do her doctorate in science. And she wanted Microbiology--was going to be a lab tech. And at any rate, she blew the tips off of her fingers in the lab while she was doing an experiment. So she couldn't go on with that because she needed the sensitivity of the soft tissue in her fingers. So that meant Gerald now is out--not totally, but did very little because of her health. Margaret is not coming back to fill in for Gerald. So I'm it. So I had to start learning these courses in order to teach these courses. And so Margaret came back and would help. And so that's kind of how my beginning at the college was--I kind of just stepped in where I needed to step in, because other people that were going to do these things weren't able. They simply weren't able. And so what it did--now I'm up at the college, and the novices and the postulants walk up for class--so I'm teaching some of the novices who were my students at St. Mary's. And actually some of them are still my dear friends, and I'm living with one of them Sister Maureen [Evelyn] Brown. She was a student at St. Mary's Academy--she was--I mean, I taught her as a novice--we did all kinds of things together--then I didn't see her for years because she went in different direction. She went into Spiritual Life and working in the parishes and really a parish associate now. And she's excellent at that. Anyway, so it was funny--I mean I felt uncomfortable, you know. And of course the novices weren't supposed to talk. Walk up to the college from here in silence. Come in the classroom, sit down, listen, walk back down in silence. [laughs]. I thought that was insane, so I'd engage them in the class.

[00:43:54.27] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: But at any rate, that was how it began. I began with teaching the novices, and then I taught the freshmen, and then I had to learn administration because I had to do some of the administrative work. Sister Gerald was still there and helping me and directing me but Sister Margaret hadn't come back yet--she was off doing other things and trying to figure out how she was going to complete her degree without her fingers functioning for her. So it was kind of a transition time and a number of things that kind of fell in place that I found myself in the classroom at the college--with feeling very insecure about what I was supposed to be teaching. So I had to learn and learn fast. So that meant I then

Chair the department during the academic year, and in the summers I had to go get my masters. So I took off and went to Creighton University [Omaha, Nebraska] in the summers. Actually, how it happens is kind of comical, in the sense that the provincial calls you in and says, "You know, you've got to get your degree." And I'm--[nods]--"Yeah." [laughs]. She says, "Well, think about it. Think about where you'd like to go." Well, you know--[gestures across top of head]--zero knowledge and information did I have at that time about what was available. And they wanted me to go not too far away--or where our Sisters might be. So then--I can't remember exactly whether it was Josephine or Cecilia Louise who said to me, "Don't go to UCLA or anything here immediately, because you'll be too close to the college, and they will expect you to do college work and do your degree work. Don't." So then they--the other thing was Seattle had a good summer program. And so then I heard--I don't know how I heard about Creighton University, but I heard about it--and fell in love with the idea. So I went to Creighton. And they were marvelous. They were great. They're the ones that started me in learning how to be a researcher and doing research.

[00:46:28.05] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: And so anyway I--each summer for three summers I went and did my masters degree. Came back and then it was time for, "You've got to go get your doctorate"--you know, get your PhD. And, "Where would you like to go?" And I said, "Well, the studies that I began at Creighton, they've already recommended that the University of Arizona at Tucson accept me, because I know the methods and the techniques and blah blah blah." So I would be a prepared grad student for them. So anyway, since our Sisters were in Tucson and the University was--"Ah, not a bad idea." So anyway, I got a grant that allowed me to start in the summer. And then the next fall--so at the end of the summer--so they taught me the method during the summer--the end of the summer they said, "Now, tell us what you're doing and how you're doing it and what you learned." And so that was my acceptance into the doctoral program. [laughs]. The professors were all lined up, and my advisor in the back of the room probably sweating it out--if this kid who doesn't know what she's doing is going to make it. Anyway, at the end he walks out of the room--he sends me out of the room--pardon me. So I'm in the hall, waiting. Couple of minutes later he comes out and he says, "You're accepted. They all voted yes. And so you'll start your classes in September." That was it. And so he liked what I did with students. And he wasn't great with students. and so when I was his grad student--that was Mac Hadley [Dr. Mac E. Hadley (1930-2006)]--he says, "You take care of the students. You teach them how to do it, and you make sure they do it right. They need any help let me know. I want you to do the students. I'm not good at it." So anyway, I started off being a mentor to the students and I was very, you know, barely out of diapers myself. So at any rate--I loved it, and fell in love with the work. And while I was doing my doctoral studies I went all over the country to present data--went to different universities--NIH [National Institute of Health] found out about me--they invited me back to NSF [National Science Foundation] and NIH in Washington [D. C.]--talked to me et cetera. When I presented my doctoral studies, they said, "Well, what are you going to do now?" And I said, "Well, I'm just determined I'm going to go back to the Mount and develop programs for women to get their degrees in pre-med and biomedical research. I'm the only student in all my classes that's a woman--or one of two. And there's--I can't figure out where all the women are. We need women in medicine. We need women in biomedical research. We think differently." And they kind of shrugged, looked at me--"Yeah, right." They're all men, so-. At any rate, they said, "Well, what kind of program are you going to develop?" And I said, "Well, I would carry on some of what--" blah blah blah. And they said, "Oh. Well let me get a committee together, because I like your ideas." So anyway, they brought me back and they said, "We think it's great. We want to support you." So anyway I went back to the Mount, set up the research, got things going--and loved it. But I kept going back to NIH and back to University of Arizona in the summer for five years for a post-doctoral grant that we got on my research. So that kept me in contact and it kept my fingers in a whole bunch of things. And so what they did in Tucson--my professor there said, "Okay, I'm going to set you up so that everything you have here--all the equipment you need from here--take with you. We'll just pack it up--take it to the Mount. And then you can teach the students there and you'll have what you need. And then come back in the summer we'll pick up from where you are and move it to the next level." So for those five years of post-doctoral that's what I did. Didn't have to buy a thing. I was used to--I knew all the equipment because I'd been using it. So it worked well. And then I could get these students prepared to go to the national meetings and present their data, meet other professors from major universities they thought they would like to go to--so they could get summer intern research--summer internships in research because of these kind of things. So it facilitated the women moving up.

[00:52:10.04] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: And so then NIH liked my ideas and so they called the Mount and Sister Rebecca [Sister Mary Rebecca Doan (1910- 1999)] was nursing professional--marvelous woman. She

was the president of the institution at the time. And anyway, NIH called me and said, "We'd like you to come back and spend six months here--to a year." And I said, "Well, I can't do that. I've got an NSF grant of returning women--women who've dropped out of science and now are coming--I need to get them ready to come back and complete their degrees." And so, I said that's the NSF grant I have. And they said, "Yeah, that's okay." And I said I'm doing blah blah blah--you know, I can't just leave--walk out and leave. So they said, "Well, think about it." They called again, and again, think about it. And so the next thing is they called the president of the Mount, and said, "We want her back here. We want to promote these ideas. We like them. She's thinking of putting together this program. We like it. Can we come out and talk with you with her in the office?" [laughs]. So, they did call me and tell me they were going to do this. And I thought, oh, you know, nothing more than embarrassed. And anyway, they came. And they said, "We will pay for the person to take your place. Remember you're not indispensable. We can bring others in to do what you're doing while you're gone, and we will pay for it. You come back to NIH." [shrugs]. So I'm sitting there, and the president's sitting there, and [unintelligible] sounds good to me. And I said, "Yes." I wasn't sure it sounded good to me. [laughs]. I didn't know what they had in mind. Well, it was marvelous. Obviously I said yes in the end. It was the best opportunity I've had in my life. They got me in touch with every granting agency back there. I spent time with them. I helped review grants. I got into the grant review stuff. So for years I went back for the major grant review sessions for all the major universities in the country. So I would get to go visit these places--broadened me dramatically. It allowed me to fit my students' talents into the different research centers for the summer. So it was a marvelous way to all of a sudden get just immersed. I would never have managed it on my own. And so I went back three times to NIH, and then kept in touch with them. Unfortunately all but one of the people that were--well there was a group of five of us--we'd sit around the table and brainstorm. And they'd say, "So, what are you thinking next? What are you going to do next?" And then they would just discuss, refine and support it. And so I started to get more and more women into the major universities, and started. And they would then--they would go back to NIH meetings and present. And so it was a graduate from the Mount. And so it just helped get more monies for the Mount.

[00:56:02.21] INTERVIEWER: Can I ask you--so I--one question that keeps coming up for me is how your vocation as a Sister and a scientist interact--intersect--they are really I think I'm sure intertwined. And I keep hearing this about women, and women in sciences. So I was wondering if you could just reflect on how your vocations--and then--and what that means for you as a Sister of St. Joseph.

[00:56:29.06] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well as a Sister of St. Joseph, you know, wherever I went they recognized me as a Sister. First of all I went in habit, and then modified habit, then down to what we called "subdued colors" [laughs]. They were supposed to be brown, black, tan, gray--subdued colors. Anyway I hated the subdued colors. [laughs]. Anyway--and when I went it was actually in the summer that I went in a modified habit--skirts you know [gestures at legs] below the knee but not--you know--they were accepted fashionably at that time. And so the change was gradual, and I made it gradual. I mean, I could have made it total--because a couple of my friends did go total from habit to secular clothes--and I didn't want to ruffle the feathers, so I tried to do it gradually. But then it--by going away in the summer helped to be able to, you know, go gradually, but each time I would be more and more into secular clothing. So that--and how did it affect me as a nun? I was a nun no matter where I went. You know, and even though I loved science and what I was--intellectually I guess I would say--born to do-- because it was gifts that you know--that people helped me facilitate. I certainly didn't do it on my own. So it was the goodness of other people. And so I--the people I interacted with really became like extended family. So the grad students I tutored and mentored became extended family. I went to their weddings, I went to their kids' baptisms, you know. I keep in touch with them--some are in London, some are, you know, they're all over the world as well as in different universities here in the States--or in [gestures air quotes] chemical work in companies. But anyway, I never separated being nun from doing science. I mean, for me it was just part of God's--part of the universe--part of God's world, and part of my world.

[00:59:02.15] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: And the world in which I lived in and also I loved had a lot of opportunities to travel, and you know, like I went to China for a couple of weeks--watched how they did some of their research--and they wanted me to--they wanted us to take students back to our labs. But it was very competitive, so--as to who could make it. So I only had a student for half a year. But they wanted the student to come to the States and experience education in science. But our program at the Mount was so intertwined between the chemistry and the bio and the work that--basically my research was biochemical--so it just melded to give them a different viewpoint. And when I went to China--when I say about what's it

mean to be a nun--it was what's it mean to be professional. What does it mean to be a professional scientist and a religious. Well, since I was in secular clothes no one really knew, per se. We were a little anomaly for the Chinese--you know, they didn't quite know how to call me--what name to call me--what to--you know. They were a little uncomfortable around me--I tried to--you know. But we didn't stay with any one of them for any length of time. But so there was some things like that. But as far as how did I feel? Well I knew that it--the fact that I was a nun made somebody uncomfortable. [laughs]. But I didn't focus on that. I just did--you know--I just treated them like I'd treat anybody else and tried to be friends with them, and let them realize I was basically [gestures air quotes] whatever we want to call normal--normal human being. And so anyway, in China it was the most obvious. They didn't--they had just opened the cathedral for Mass on Sundays. Religion was not their thing--particularly [gestures air quotes] Catholic was not their thing. So that was interesting to me. Our hotel looked out on a school ground and a block away was the Catholic cathedral--church. But they brought us over to see their research, and to say look at what wonderful things we are doing. And they had gotten all of this equipment from the United States, because they wanted the most modern and--the equipment that they thought would do what they wanted it to do. So they were showing us--in a sense, bragging--about the fact. And so they--we went to the biomedical research centers from the north to the south in China. And then we went out into the countryside, which is gorgeous. And so they had done these breast cancer research studies and they wanted to show us their results. They took us in this room--I was mixed between being furious, embarrassed and devastated. They had the women strip to the waist and show us what marvelous surgery they had done in removing their breasts. Well I was like [laughs]--I couldn't wait to get out of the room. And I backed out and I said, "It's inappropriate" to the people who were with me. We were a group of fourteen. And so then I said to our Chinese hosts, "Don't ever do that again. Don't ever embarrass your women in front of us. That is inappropriate in our culture. We would not do that. We understand what you are trying to tell us, but don't ever expose your patients like that to us again. Tell us about it. You can show us pictures if you want, but not--". And so then the next thing they did was take us--which was fun and fascinating--was to take us into this room and show us how they walked on people's backs--and you know, for back problems, et cetera. So we saw all kinds of things. And all the [unintelligible] equipment that they had et cetera. They didn't expose any other patients--that was the end of that. They realized that that did not go over. But I was angry as well as embarrassed for the women. It was just so inappropriate. Anyway, what we learned later was that a lot of this equipment--when we'd go through with these research labs and through the medical centers--and they'd have all these white sheets and they told us that they kept the white sheets over the equipment to keep it clean. Well they didn't use it any more. They didn't know how to use it--they didn't use it. So it was to make them sound good. They were building all these new high rises--but they were empty. So it was to show off an attempt to become modern but not true--not valid. And so it was very interesting experience. They have a beautiful country. We went into their classrooms. It was fun to walk around the university setting and see the laundry out of all the windows--from their--out on the little window ledge for--that's how they dried their clothes--they hung them outside on little ropes. And so it was a different culture--a lot of beauty about the culture, no question. But as far as the biomedical research was concerned, they had a long way to go. And we found out later that they never used a lot of this equipment--they didn't know how to use it--so it sat covered. And I don't know how many years after that before they actually got them trained. They'd bring their young people over to the States--or their researchers--train them--not just to the States--to England too--England they took care of a lot of it--and then they would go back and be able to show their own. But it was a fascinating experience to have. And it also taught us as individuals--because we were all biomedical researchers in the group--what it taught us is how to get at--graciously--get at some of the things that were going on in the research even in the States--when we went around and did visits for grants. And so a learning experience--one I've never forgotten. But, you know.

[01:07:09.11] INTERVIEWER: It seems like a lot of your work--not only your research but your overall scholarly work has been dedicated to getting women into the sciences.

[01:07:19.03] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Has.

[01:07:20.10] INTERVIEWER: Yes. And when I think of--it sounds like "all of which woman is capable" to me. So what would you say you are proud of, or what changes have you been witness to and part of?

[01:07:31.29] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well, not because of me, let me tell you. I'm proud of it that now instead of being in medicine--in biomedical research even less--instead of being less than a third women it is

now over fifty percent--about fifty--some place between fifty-three and fifty-six--seven percent of women in medicine--and I think it's in the thirties of biomedical research. So it's not that it's better--it's just different. We look at things a little differently. We might ask different questions that spur us to do different things--or somebody else to do something different to find an answer to that. So I'm just--determined that I was going to get the women out there. They're marvelous. You know some of the students that were my privilege to teach and move into these fields--wonderful women--just marvelous--wonderful women. All of them are married, have families--and are still involved. And so--and I taught a bunch of nurses, which I meet in the hospital when I was a patient. And they would tease me and I would tease them with, "You going to do all the things I taught you? You're making me nervous." [laughs]. But you know, it was that kind of--it is--I was--I think I said--one of one or two in all of my classes. It just appalled me. And I was like--and I would say to the professors, "Where are the women? Am I the only woman?" And they'd kind of shrug and say, "Yeah. You're the only woman." [laughs] And the fact that I was a nun didn't bother most of them. Now most of them were not Catholic--most of my professors were not Catholic. And yet it didn't [gestures air quotes] bother them that I was a nun. It kind of fascinated them. So you know--that I could be a human--normal human being with the same likes and dislikes as you know ordinary women. [laughs]. So--but they were extremely supportive and gracious and good to me. And whether I was given advantages because I was a nun--I don't know that. I don't know that. I fell into the groups and we--the people at NIH were personal friends for years, as I say--all of them are dead now, unfortunately. Of course I was the younger kid in the group. But they liked my ideas and I kept talking--women, women, women, women--and I kept talking--this program, that program, and I said, "We need to get answers!" And they said, "Well, think about it. How are you going to do it? Let us hear what you want to do." And I wouldn't say nine out of ten times, but probably eight out of ten times they would support it and give me either the contacts I needed or the money I needed. They supported me financially. And when I say me, I mean the Mount, and so other faculty that I had hired to do--who were interested in doing the same thing that--not that I was doing research--wise--but interested in educating women to go into science and medicine. And so they gave me the money and the support systems, and took my faculty back--I said, "I want my faculty to come back and meet these people--they've got to meet these people." And you know I just hired this new young faculty blah, blah, blah--and he's very naive, and I have to get him back to meet these people--they have to see what's available there for them. So they'd say, "Okay. We'll take her back. Who're you going to put in her place?"--you know, kind of thing. And it was so that kind of constant exchange--the people at NIH were like extended family--really warm family. I knew everything about their families, et cetera--knew about their health. And it was very hard--very hard to lose them--because they were just like--all but one were men, and they were like brothers to me--brothers and family to me. So, it was hard.

[01:12:24.04] INTERVIEWER: Sister, is there any part of the CSJ history or charism that is a particular--that you draw your own inspiration from in all the work that you've done? You connect with 1650, or?

[01:12:37.25] INTERVIEWER: I--yeah--well I've been to Le Puy--and you know--I do connect to that because I started out with such modest et cetera--and with the point of serving people in need. A bunch of women serving women, children, and men eventually--but you know, in those days, it wasn't the custom for the women to serve the men, per se. But anyway, no--but you know, when we talk about the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph--we have come to that over the ages. We still as a community--as a religious community--go out into the city, look at the needs, and see what we can do to address them. They did that the very beginning of the formation of the community. We still do that--we go into new places--we hear that there's a problem here--or that they--talk about the street people--talk about the trafficked women, et cetera, et cetera--and the trafficked children. We've tried to influence that--get into that--be available--house them--take you know--do it in different ways. And now we're kind of spread all over the world--not in huge numbers, which disappointed me, because as we started to do these things outside of our own little comfort zones our numbers dwindled, dwindled and dwindled. And young women now have so many choices to make--have so many options when they grow up and get out of school--and want to try those options. And that's wonderful. I mean, you know--but at the same time there's less looking at a religious community--that kind of long-term commitment is not the culture today--for anybody. We can change jobs more quickly--we can, you know, change locations more quickly. So because of the cultural change in the world as well as in our own country the numbers in religious communities have gone down and so we don't have--the warm bodies, I guess I would say. We don't have the warm bodies to go out and address the same issues that we used to. And yet, our associates are becoming more and more us, and they're going out to address these needs. And it's wonderful to see it. And so our community work is still going on--not as much as we would

like it to--but still going on--because both men and women as our associates--many husbands and wives. I just came from a Monday night associate meeting in San Diego--well a cluster meeting--was half and half associates and half nuns. And we spent a lot of time talking charismatic and charism. They wanted to know the difference. They kept talking, "What do you mean? What do we mean by this?" So we kept giving examples--examples of what they were doing--and that they are indeed living the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. And there was a new husband wife--the wife's husband died, the husband's wife died--they had married, and they are a part of--the newest people in the group. They're marvelous. And so the work goes on. You know, we think we're so important because we're Sisters of St. Joseph for the charism. The charism's with all the people that we associate with too. They're doing it too. They live it too--they perform it. And if they don't do the work themselves they get the help for the people that need it--through other people that do do it. So you know--we speak of the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph--which we have a very difficult time defining ourselves, let alone others--but when we speak of that, everybody--it just spreads--the charism spreads. It's not something that we own--something that we want to spread and share. And we find that there's loads and loads of people in other vocations--married and not married--who want to share that--married and divorced, you know--wonderful way to bring them back in comfortably into the belief system. So I have trouble with [gestures air quotes] wasting time to define the charism--let's do it--just do it. Live it. And I don't care how you define it or say that charismatic is this and this is a charism of the Sisters--their ability to--from the very beginning of our community--go out into the city, see what are the needs, and see what you can do to relieve those needs. It's really a very simple thing. And it can grow into very wonderful things that get done. But it's really a very simple notion. So I don't like to fuss about defining terms and--.

[01:19:23.25] INTERVIEWER: Sister Annette, what has been the greatest joy of religious life for you?

[01:19:30.20] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Being able to be here. Being able to be a Sister of St. Joseph. We--a bunch of the Sisters were together socially last night at dinner, and we were saying, you know--and Maureen Brown and I--my graduate--my student--I live with her. And so you know we were kind of laughing about the fact that, you know, this bit of Sister of St. Joseph--and this--I'm sorry, come back to your question.

[01:20:11.28] INTERVIEWER: The joy of your--

[01:20:13.03] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: --the joy that comes from it, comes again and again from the people we interact with--not necessarily the people we help. Now I'm not saying they aren't grateful--but the people we interact with--the people who join us--the people who believe the same thing, in the sense that--we have so much--and as community women we have so much in community. All our needs are taken care of, basically, you know--it's wonderful. How many people have that? And so it's not an effort to go out and help the people who are in need--it's like a relief that you can do something to improve for someone else--the position or the situation, their needs--bring them in--let them realize that they too can be the giver, not just the receiver. And so that to me--just the people--people I've met--because I'm a Sister--I'm embarrassed at times, by the goodness of all kinds of people--all religions--just because quote I'm a nun. And they do treat us differently. And they do kind of put us on a pedestal--that's a little embarrassing. So you know--I'm no better than the next person--I'm really not. I'm still a human being--we're all the same temptations and frustrations and annoyances that all of us have--because I'm human. And that's what we--I think we need to remember. Yes we're religious--yes we're nuns--yes we've dedicated our lives--but then so have wives and husbands--dedicated their lives to each other, to their children--doctors to their patients, nurses. You know, it's like I don't think I'm any better. In fact, at times I'm embarrassed because of how bad I am. I don't think I'm any better than any of the other people here, or even the people that I meet on the street who are in need. And I kind of cringe with, "Should I? Shouldn't I?" You know, is it safe to me to approach them and give them something? Is it safe for me to engage them in conversation to see what their needs are? You know, it's what you want to do and what you're just not quite sure you should do. Because they don't care whether you're a nun or not. They don't even know whether you're a nun or not. So you try to use the advantage of being a religious woman when it will serve the needs of others. [shrugs]. That's really it. And out of that comes a joy--it really is. So when you say what is the joy, it's just being and doing what I've been doing forever. So that's all.

[01:24:04.09] KELBY THWAITS: I have one thing before we close out--before we finish up. You talked about

your love for science, and how it really is the universe and how you feel that coincides with religious belief. Did you ever find though, that there were ever challenges, and how did you reconcile that with your religious belief--science and religious belief--

[01:24:29.13] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: --I'll tell you some--I'll give you some examples--

[01:24:30.13] KELBY THWAITS: --and your love for science--and what are the parallels or the conflicts and how did you reconcile that?

[01:24:36.16] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Well, I'll give you some of the examples that I met. When I was first starting my research--and when I was in training with my research--I would have--I used rats, mice, lizards initially for doing my studies--because I--and I'd get some of these guys come up next to me and say, "You're a nun. How can you kill that rat. You're a nun. How can you cut the head off that lizard." And then I would just smile sweetly and say--not so sweetly--I would smile and say, "Well, the option I have or the alternative I have is that you give me your brain tissue and your heart tissue. And if you're game to do that then I don't have to kill that lizard or that rat." [laughs]. And it would shut them up as it were. But they'd say, "Okay. You've got a point"-- [laughs]--and start a conversation usually--or just take off. So yes I would--and more than once they would say, "What are you doing? Aren't you supposed to be in church praying?" And I said, "I'm praying right here. I'm with God's nature, I'm with you, praying right here. This is a prayer. I don't have to be kneeling in a church to talk to God. God's right here with us." I would just give them rather flip answers like that and it usually not only would calm them down it would usually make them comfortable, and then they would--they'd get off the high-nosed mighty stuff, and they'd start to joke and talk about it-- "What are you doing. And tell me why you're doing it," et cetera. So, no--I'd meet with that more in the research labs than at other times. Every once in a while when we were presenting at the national meetings or international meetings I would get a few. My students--I warned my students--I prepared my students for questions like that, so that they would not be put in tears or go speechless. So I said, "Don't let anyone talk you down. Just be gracious and say well, what about--or well if I did this--if I didn't do that would we find a cure for--" So there were two things. Sometimes the guys would sidle up--just with girls, not with me--sidle up next to the student--because we a lot of beautiful young women--sidle up next to the student and make some smart-aleck remark just to get their attention--just to get them talking. And so I had to prepare them for--you know, what might be said, what might happen. And all kinds of things would happen. And some of them would give a really nasty response. But I tried to train them into--you can be assertive but not aggressive, and not nasty if someone asks you something you can't answer--or if you see that they're teasing you. I said, "They're teasing you. Just let it go. Or say I don't have time for that." So you know--but you got it--I got it--I got it as a nun. I frequently got, "How can a nun be doing this?" And I said, "Well, are you going to do it if I don't? We need an answer to this. Are you going to take my place and do it?" [shrugs]. Then as I say it would usually shut them up--male or female or whatever--professor or whatever. So you know how--you learn how to stand your own as it were. And yet at the same time be able to continue a conversation--nine out of ten times--with those people. Because usually what they are trying to do is make an inroad--"Who is this nun? A nun? I've never talked to a nun." [laughs] What's a nun like? You know, so I usually it's just really that more than a putdown. They're just trying to make contact--some kind of personal contact. So I learned that fairly young, so learned how to you know bring it around. And then I'd ask them a question after they'd make some you know. So usually they just wanted to say is this, what is this nun's thing? Most of them didn't know anything about it, and they just knew that you were--you know--different-- [laughs]--and you weren't married--[gestures air quotes] you didn't like men--[laughs]--you know, the interpretations would be--I would laugh. But anyway.

[01:29:55.05] KELBY THWAITS: [unintelligible]

[01:29:58.29] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: Yeah right. Or that you're holy or better than some others. And every once in a while I'd get the kind of--"You think you're better than somebody else." And I said, "Oh do I. And who is that somebody else? Maybe I am." [laughs]. I got to be snotty in the--you had to maintain your own--because I was living and surviving in a world--male world. And as I say, even in my research there were only two of us that were female. So you just learned how to manage it.

[01:30:41.02] INTERVIEWER: Sister Annette, was there anything else that you reflected on or wanted to share that we haven't asked you about today?

[01:30:49.13] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: No. I mean, I didn't want to prepare anything because you know I'm a talker. I've lived it, so it's just talking it. And I can't imagine anyone wanting to spend twenty fifty sixty or whatever minutes listening to this. But no, there isn't. The one thing I wanted to say is I wanted to thank you for doing this. Because I owe so much to the Mount. I loved every minute at the Mount--still do. I'm sorry that my health hasn't allowed me to be back more. When I left though--I retired in 2006--and when I did I said to the faculty, I said, "I've hired you. You're excellent faculty. I'm not going to be hanging over your shoulder. I'm going to move where I'm not immediately available. If you need me to check your grant requests, et cetera, I'll be happy to do things for you. But I'm not going to be hanging around. This is yours. You make it yours. Do with it what you'd like. If I can be of any assistance to you, or help make contacts with you, I'm not going to be able to do that for long, because I'm on the way out, you're on the way in. And I wish you every bit of luck." And that was it. And I really--you know I've stopped up and walked the hall and say hi--and they're always very lovely and gracious. But I deliberately keep my distance. I don't believe that I belong there. I did my thing--loved doing it--am happy I did it--would do it all over again if you know--but it's theirs. And I did hire faculty I thought had the research ability. Because my grants--when I wrote the grants--I included at least two to three and sometimes four other faculty so that there were five of us on the grant, and we all five of us got money. I mean, I didn't take all the monies. The money was for the institution and for the researchers who were training young women to be biomedical researchers. That's just the way it was. And do I miss it? Oh yes. I miss it--in my heart I miss it. Do I know it was time for me to get out? Yes, I do. That's kind of the next part of my life is retirement--and I volunteer at the parish. Then of course I fell and couldn't use it so--[laughs]--much of what I do was handwork at the--so anyway--and then people--people interaction. But anyway--no--one more week and I'm back to looking like a human being. He says--[points to forehead]--six more months with this--says it takes a full year--but he says you're healing very well and he said in a year--because it's already been--it's been five months--in a year you won't even know it happened--it will be that healed, totally. So yeah--I figured that that's a blessing.

[01:34:19.08] INTERVIEWER: [unintelligible]

[01:34:19.08] SISTER ANNETTE BOWER: I mean, I can't tell you how grateful I am for the life that I have had. Could I have had that same life outside of community? I'd never know. But I doubt it. I truly doubt it. And did people treat me differently--and undeservedly--because I was a nun? Probably yes. I think they do. But no, it's been a wonderful [gestures air quotes] trip as it were, and I'm glad I'm on the train. [laughs]. Or the bus or whatever. [all laugh]. No, it's been wonderful. I'd do it all over again if I could--with a little more giving and a little less what I call [gestures air quotes] selfishness--self-comfort--whatever--meeting my own needs and meeting the needs of the--. The people of today--the needs of the people of today are not really different. It's that society is different and your ability to reach those people is different. It used to be safer in the past. You could go up to street people. You could, you know, go to these women who were so destitute. And they were so desperate they would hear you and listen and accept what you were offering. Today that's not true. In order to survive--both women and men--have become more defensive--because it's so dangerous on the streets today, and it's so dangerous if they've lost everything or if they've lost people that they love. And they're not comfortable is I guess the word I would find--comfortable with seeking help. And a lot of what we do is help them get that help today. Which is a different kind of ministry than--you know, initially, we taught and did nursing. Now we do everything. And there's less of us in teaching, and less of us in nursing. There are still some, but less. It's heartbreaking to see that we had to sell our hospitals--heartbreaking. Yes. That is one thing that I wish I could have prevented, but--.

[01:37:14.18] INTERVIEWER: [Director's comments].

[01:38:41.01] End of interview.

Interview Index

Interview Date: October 26, 2016

Interviewee: Sister [Cecile] Annette Bower

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Kelby Thwaites, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Mary Trunk, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Laura Townsend, Production Coordinator, CSJ Institute.

Location: [Carondelet Center]

Transcription Date: 12/19/2016

Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments.]

[00:01:32.20] Introduction. Full name and age: Sister Cecile Annette Bower, age 83. In graduate school, Annette Bower.

[00:02:30.05] Early life. Born Rochester, New York. Father's passing. Moving to Inglewood, California. Siblings two brothers: Jack 13 years older. Second brother Don (3 years older). Both passed.

[00:05:04.00] Moving to California as teenager. Living in New York. Story about going to the beach and getting hit in face. Missing friends. High School at Mercy High with Sisters of Mercy.

[00:07:20.26] First day of school at St. Mary's Academy. Principal Sister [Mary] Josephine [Feeley (1905-1991)]. Sister Cecilia Louise [Moore (1928-2004)], chemistry teacher. Boarding at St. Mary's Academy.

[00:09:53.00] Sister Josephine and decision to be a Sister. Early experiences meeting religious. Sister Josephine twirling rosary.

[00:14:09.20] Deciding to be a Sister of St. Joseph. Finishing degree in accelerated program over one Summer.

[00:17:27.27] Attraction to CSJs. Charism a word never used then. Concern for people in need.

[00:19:39.06] Love of science. Mother's love of nature. Growing vegetables and keeping animals. Brothers in engineering and technology. Talking to Sisters in school and church.

[00:23:56.29] Family reaction to vocation. Visiting father in hospital.

[00:25:28.23] Early community life. Talking to high school students during novitiate instead of keeping "separate". "Old" Saint Mary's high school.

[00:28:34.04] Rule of silence. Easier to isolate self than keep silence with others. Story about Sister Roberta [??] and running on stairs.

[00:30:59.19] Receiving habit and taking vows. Missing novices while taking vows. Excitement.

[00:33:19.22] [Director's comments.] [Cut.]

[00:35:36.28] Attending the Mount and early missions. First mission grade school in Los Angeles. Sister Anastasia [??], superior--position of veil indicated if her sports team had won or lost. Teaching biology at St. Mary's Academy high school.

[00:38:52.08] Sister faculty at the Mount. Sister Cecilia Louise [Moore (1928-2004)]. Sister Mary Gerald Leahy [(1917-2004)], chair of Biological Sciences and Chemistry--researching mosquitos and students feeding them blood. Sister Margaret [Marie] O'Rourke. Teaching Biological Sciences at the Mount. Sister Maureen [Evelyn] Brown, former student. Rule of silence.

[00:43:57.06] Various positions at Mount. Teaching novices, Biology, administration. Acting Department Chair of Biology. Obtaining Masters degree at Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska in three summers.

[00:46:30.20] Obtaining PhD at University of Arizona at Tucson. Mac Hadley [Dr. Mac E. Hadley (1930-2006)] advisor. Teaching as a graduate student. Receiving National Institute of Health (NIH) and National Science Foundation (NSF) grants to develop programs for women in pre-medicine and biology. Five years postdoctoral work in Tucson. Tucson donating laboratory equipment to Mount.

[00:52:11.18] Sister [Mary] Rebecca Doan [(1910-1999)], nursing professor, former MSMU president. NIH invitation to come Washington and review STEM grants and pay for her replacement at MSMU. Working to get women into university science programs.

[00:56:05.09] Intersection of vocation as Sister and Scientist. Changing habit. Science as part of God's world.

[00:59:13.20] Traveling to China. Exchange students. Being a Catholic nun in China. Chinese biomedical research programs--viewing exposed women patients. Unused medical equipment. Learning how to review programs for grants.

[01:07:10.18] State of women in science. "All of which women is capable". Women's viewpoint of science. Attitude of professors toward women religious. Financial support for women in science from NIH.

[01:12:26.02] Inspiration from CSJ history and charism. Development of idea of charism. Meeting needs of the city. Trafficking of women and children. Increase in options for young women affecting number of women religious. Charism spreading to lay associates.

[01:18:18.05] Don't define charism--live it.

[01:19:26.11] Greatest joy of religious life. Sister Maureen Brown. Joy from the people in community. Gift of being able to help others. Being put on a pedestal because a religious. Dedication of others. Balancing safety and assistance.

[01:24:07.12] Challenges integrating science and beliefs. Using animals for experiments. Science as prayer. Preparing students to face questions about women's role in science. Being assertive instead of aggressive. Curiosity about religious life.

[01:30:42.23] Other reflections. Thanks to crew. Retirement. Keeping distance from current faculty to let them excel. Volunteer work.

[01:34:21.28] Gratitude for life. Meeting needs of people today. People becoming defensive and unwilling to seek help. Community selling hospitals.

[01:37:15.14] [Director's comments].

[01:38:39.08] End of interview.